

# Public Health Stormy Weather Tips

Dover – With the potential for heavy rain and high winds this weekend, the Division of Public Health (DPH) reminds Delawareans to stay safe and healthy, and to protect their pets using these tips:

## Food Safety

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends stocking a three-day supply of non-perishable food. If you lose electrical power, be very cautious with refrigerated foods. Do not rely on appearance or odor of food; use a freezer thermometer. If the freezer thermometer reads 40 degrees F or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40 degrees F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook. Perishable food such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk, and eggs not kept adequately refrigerated or frozen may cause illness, even when thoroughly cooked.

Keeping refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible will keep food cold for about four hours. A full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs or leftovers) that has been above 40 degrees F for two hours or more.

If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish or eggs kept at safe temperatures, cook the food thoroughly to the proper temperature to kill bacteria. Fifty pounds of dry ice should keep an 18-cubic foot fully-stocked freezer cold for two days.

Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with flood

water. Food containers with screw-caps, snap lids, pull tops, and crimped caps are not considered waterproof. Also, discard cardboard juice/milk/baby formula boxes and home canned foods if they have come in contact with flood water. Discard canned foods with swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting, or dents that prevent normal stacking or opening.

### Flood Waters

Avoid flood waters whenever possible. Do not allow children to play in or around storm water collection drains or any flood waters. Drainage areas may have swift currents that can create a drowning hazard. Flood waters may also transmit disease and cause serious illness. In some locations, during periods of heavy rain, raw sewage overflows contaminate storm water systems. Additionally, storm water runoff may be contaminated with chemicals and fecal matter from pets or agricultural animals. A common source of *Clostridium tetani*, the bacteria that causes tetanus, is human feces. Contaminated floodwaters may also contain infectious strains of *E. coli*, such as antibiotic resistant *E. coli*.

For fact sheets on flood preparedness and recovery, visit the [DPH website](#) for more information.

### Safe Drinking Water

FEMA recommends stocking one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation. If you are advised to boil your drinking water, heat water at the highest possible temperature so that it bubbles constantly (a rolling boil). Continue to boil water for one minute, and then let it cool. Store in clean, covered containers. Residents can also disinfect water using household bleach. Add 1/8 teaspoon (or 8 drops) of regular, unscented, liquid household bleach for each gallon of water. Stir it well and let it stand for 30 minutes before using it. Bottled water is another safe alternative.

For bottle feeding infants, use prepared, canned baby formula

that requires no added water. When using concentrated or powdered formulas, prepare with bottled water if the local water source is potentially contaminated. Wash fruits and vegetables with water from a safe source before eating.

For information on safe drinking water, visit the DPH website [here](#).

### Avoid Carbon Monoxide

A common source of fatalities during and after storms is carbon monoxide poisoning. Released from gasoline-powered generators, camp stoves, grills, lanterns and charcoal-burning devices are designed for outdoor use only. Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can be lethal at high levels. If combustion devices are used indoors, dangerous CO levels can build up rapidly with no warning. Never use them inside and always ensure that any outside use is well-ventilated.

### Keeping up with your Neighbor and Loved Ones

If you or a loved one has special needs or lives alone, make sure your support network is ready and you have someone checking in regularly if you need assistance. Ensure you have enough medication, oxygen, medical supplies, and food for any special dietary needs, particularly if your transportation options are limited over the weekend.

If you receive home health care, contact your home health care provider and ask how bad weather impacts their schedule and their plans for reaching you.

For further information on preparations for people with disabilities and special needs visit the Red Cross website [here](#).

### Pet Safety

Keep your pets indoors and with you. Bring your pet inside immediately at the first sign or warning of a storm or severe weather. Never leave a pet outside, either chained or loose.

Pets are likely to become frightened, wander away from home, and hide during severe weather. They can become lost, injured, or even killed. Check your pet supplies to ensure that you have enough food, water, and any necessary medications or other requirements for at least three days.

Identify safe interior spaces for your pets, away from windows. Create a comfortable area with their favorite bedding and toys. Consider separating dogs and cats to minimize stress and conflict.

When walking dogs, stay close to home in protected areas and avoid flooding. Watch for potential flying debris or falling branches. Keep an eye on the ground for possible downed power lines or other dangerous objects. If the wind speed is too dangerous, provide paper or pads inside for your dog to use instead of going outside.

For Delaware storm updates, visit:  
<http://www.dema.delaware.gov/>.

For emergency preparedness kit tips, visit:  
<http://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit>.

For ongoing DPH health and safety-related storm tips, visit us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/DEPublicHealth>.

*Individuals seeking TTY services should call 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460. A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind, or speech-disabled can use a TTY to type his/her conversation to a relay operator, who then reads the typed conversation to a hearing person at the DPH call center. The relay operator relays the hearing person's spoken words by typing them back to the TTY user. To learn more about translation services and TTY availability in Delaware, visit [delawarerelay.com](http://delawarerelay.com).*

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting

health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.